

Message Text

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SUBJECT: SOVIET DELEGATION IN RADIO/TV

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1. CAO AND IO MET AUGUST 13 WITH LETNUNOV TO DISCUSS US VISIT. APOLOGIES WERE EXTENDED FOR AILING OGANOV, WHOSE ILLNESS, ACCORDING TO LETUNOV, WAS NOT "DIPLOMATIC." AMONG OTHERS PRESENT WERE ACTING CHIEF OF FOREIGN RELATIONS FOR STATE RADIO-TV COMMITTEE OKSYUKEVICH AND VALERIY GUSEV, NOMINEE FOR SYRACUSE TV PROJECT (SUBJECT SEPTEL).

2. LETUNOV SAID THAT IN GENERAL HE AND OGANOV SATISFIED WITH PROGRAM AND PLEASED WITH OPPORTUNITY TO VISIT US AND DISCUSS VARIOUS TOPICS WITH PROFESSIONAL AMERICANS. HE SAID HE OFFERED CRITICISMS IN THIS CONTEXT AND IN HOPE THAT NEXT PROGRAM WOULD BENEFIT FROM THEIR PROBLEMS.

3. EXCLUSION OF LIPOVETSKIY FROM DELEGATION WAS FIRST SORE POINT RAISED BY LETUNOV. HE AND OGANOV WERE SORRY BELOBOROD'KO COULD NOT ACCOMPANY THEM BUT THEIR SECOND CHOICE WAS LIPOVETSKIY WHO, THEY CLAIMED, WOULD HAVE MADE ENTIRE PROGRAM RUN MORE SMOOTHLY. AS IT WAS, THE

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REFUSAL TO ALLOW THE NY CORRESPONDENT TO ATTEND CERTAIN

EVENTS FOR UNKNOWN REASONS ANGERED THE SOVDEL. EMBOFFS SAID THESE PROGRAMS WERE SIMPLY NOT DESIGNED FOR FOREIGNERS ALREADY RESIDENT IN THE US. NEVERTHELESS, WE ADMITTED OUR PUZZLEMENT AS TO WHY LIPOVETSKIY HAD BEEN BANNED FROM SUCH PROGRAM ITEMS AS "GOOD MORNING, AMERICA." (THIS ESPECIALLY SURPRISING SINCE ABC HAS COMPARATIVELY GOOD WORKING RELATIONS WITH SOVIET TV. FURTHERMORE, EMBASSY FINDS IT DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND INABILITY OF PROGRAMMERS TO DISCOVER IN ADVANCE WHO WOULD BE "GOOD MORNING" GUESTS. THIS NATURALLY LOOKED LIKE SET-UP TO SOVDEL.)

4. NEXT ITEM OF IRRITATION ON LETUNOV'S LIST WAS BOSTON. AGAIN, IN GENERAL, LETUNOV WAS SATISFIED WITH VPS/MARGOLIUS EFFORTS. HOWEVER, HE SAID "MARGOLIUS' PEOPLE LET HIM DOWN IN BOSTON." HE COMPLAINED THE BOSTON ESCORTS WERE OFTEN UNINFORMED ABOUT OR DISINTERESTED IN THE AGENCA. LETUNOV MADE IT CLEAR THAT UNLIKE MOST OTHER STOPS, BOSTON SIMPLY DID NOT DEVOTE ADEQUATE ATTENTION TO THE IMPORTANT SOVIET VISITORS. (ON OTHER HAND, DEPT. ESCORT-INTERPRETER WAS CREDITED WITH UNTANGLING MANY ADMINISTRATIVE SNAFUS -- LETUNOV SAID HE WAS "VERY GOOD AT HANDLING OUR MONEY.") ON MEETING THE SOVIET DISSIDENTS AT A CONTEMPORARY ART RECEPTION, LETUNOV CLAIMED THAT IT WAS NOT THEIR PRESENCE WHICH OFFENDED BUT THAT THEY "SURROUNDED" OGANOV IN A VERY HOSTILE MOOD AND THE LOCAL MEDIA TRIED TO RECORD THE CONFRONTATION. LETUNOV MAINTAINED THIS WAS NO WAY TO TREAT A GUEST. ON POSITIVE SIDE, THEY MUCH ENJOYED OPPORTUNITY TO SEE PERFORMANCE OF MOISEYEV GROUP IN BOSTON.

5. IN LESS SPECIFIC CRITICISMS, LETUNOV COMPLAINED THAT THEY HAD SEEN ANTI-SOVIET MOVIE ON TV IN NEW YORK. HE WENT ON TO STATE THAT MAJOR TV NETWORKS HAD PRACTICALLY NOTHING ON ABOUT USSR AND THAT COVERAGE WAS ANTI-SOVIET. LETUNOV SUGGESTED USG COULD RIGHT THIS IMBALANCE, TO WHICH EMBOFFS REPLIED BY TURNING TO OKSYUKEVICH AND ASKING HIM TO COMMENT BASED ON HIS CONSIDERABLE CONTACT WITH US NETWORKS. OKSYUKEVICH REPLIED THAT US TV IS ONLY INTERESTED IN SOVIET SPORTS. ACCORDING TO LETUNOV, OGANOV WAS UPSET AT GENERAL IGNORANCE ABOUT USSR AMONG AMERICAN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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POPULACE AND FELT THEIR QUESTIONS TENDED TO BE NAIVE, STEREOTYPED AND SOMETIMES HOSTILE. EMBOFFS ASKED IF SOVDEL OBJECTED TO POLITICAL DISCUSSIONS AND OPPORTUNITY TO PRESENT THEIR VIEWS. LETUNOV REPLIED THEY WELCOMED POLITICAL DISCUSSIONS. (IN REPLY TO DIRECT QUESTION WHY THEY HAD NOT WISHED TO SEE POLITICAL CARTOONIST -- A SPECIFIC SOVIET REQUEST -- LETUNOV CLAIMED HE "DIDN'T REMEMBER.")

6. LETUNOV SAID THEIR MOST IMPRESSIVE RECOLLECTION WAS THE QUIETLY EFFICIENT OPERATION OF AMERICAN PROFESSIONALS. HE MENTIONED THIS SEVERAL TIMES, E.G., AT TV NEWS PROGRAM IN NEW YORK, AT COCA COLA, AND CLEARLY THESE BUSINESS MEETINGS WERE BOTH PERSONALLY AND PROFESSIONALLY THE MOST ENLIGHTENING AND PLEASANT FOR SOVDEL.

7. ONE DISAPPOINTMENT WAS THEIR IMPRESSION OF PBS, PARTICULARLY THE NEWS PROGRAMMING, WHICH LETUNOV SAID WAS "VERY WEAK" COMPARED TO THE NETWORKS. AT THIS POINT OKSYUKEVICH SAID SOVIET TV UNHAPPY WITH LACK OF PBS FOLLOW-UP TO PROPOSALS FOR AN EXCHANGE OF PROGRAMS. EMBOFFS SAID IN THEIR PERSONAL OPINION, PBS NEWS PROGRAMMING IN WASHINGTON WAS OUTSTANDING.

8. LETUNOV THEN WENT ON RAMBLING DISCOURSE ABOUT DIFFERENCES BETWEEN "FREEDOM" IN US AND USSR. HE COMPLAINED SPECIFICALLY ABOUT JEWISH DEMONSTRATIONS AGAINST SOVIETS IN NYC WHICH "CONTRIBUT TO POOR RELATIONS" BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES. THIS KIND OF FREEDOM SHOULD NOT BE PERMITTED, SAID LETUNOV. LIKEWISE, DEMONSTRATIONS AT THE WHITE HOUSE AND ON CAPITOL HILL SHOULD BE BANNED: "DO YOU THINK WE WOULD PERMIT DEMONSTRATIONS IN THE KREMLIN?" HE ASKED. WHEN EMBOFFS SUGGESTED THAT DEMONSTRATIONS WHICH ENDANGERED NEITHER LIFE NOR PROPERTY WERE CONSIDERED A SACRED FORM OF DEMOCRATIC EXPRESSION IN THE US, AND THAT OUR CONGRESS CONSIDERED THIS ONE VOICE OF THEIR CONSTITUENCY, LETUNOV MERELY SHOOK HIS HEAD IN DISBELIEF, IMPLYING THAT EMBOFFS KNOW POLICE COULD CONTROL IF THEY WANTED. HE CITED INCIDENT IN BOSTON WHICH SHOWED THAT MOUNTED POLICE WERE READY TO BREAK UP DEMONSTRATIONS. WHEN DEMONSTRATORS APPROACHED SOVDEL AS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THEY WERE TALKING WITH GROUP, A POLICEMAN ASKED IF THEY WERE BEING BOTHERED.

9. LETUNOV CONCLUDED BY SAYING THAT HE HAD DWELLED ON THE NEGATIVE BUT WISHED TO REITERATE THAT THE OVERALL IMPRESSION HAD BEEN POSITIVE. THERE HAD BEEN PROBLEMS, BOTH LOGISTICAL AND IDEOLOGICAL, BUT HE AND OGANOV WERE GENERALLY SATISFIED WITH THE VISIT. THERE WILL BE OTHER SUCH TRIPS, SAID LETUNOV, AND HOPEFULLY THEIR CRITICISMS WILL BE USEFUL. EMBOFFS THANKED LETUNOV FOR HIS TIME AND FRANKNESS, AND EXPRESSED HOPES OF SEEING OGANOV AT SOME POINT.

10. COMMENT: WITHOUT TALKING WITH OGANOV, IT IS DIFFICULT TO ASSESS SOVDEL POST-TRIP ATTITUDE TOWARD

THEIR US VISIT. AS REF C PREDICTED AND REF B CONFIRMED,
OGANOV CLEARLY DOMINATED THE PROCEEDINGS. AS FAR AS
LETUNOV IS CONCERNED, HIS PRESENT ATTITUDE -- AS EXPRESSED
TO EMBOFFS WITHOUT BENEFIT OF OGANOV'S PRESENCE --
DOES NOT SUPPORT REF B CONCLUSION THAT SOVIET REACTION
TO PROGRAM AND US WAS GENERALLY UNFAVORABLE.
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